

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently amended) A method for retrieving client boot information in a network environment with multiple boot servers, comprising:
 - sending from a client an initial request for client configuration information to a first boot server;
 - if the client configuration information is not found on the first boot server, sending from the client a list request for a boot server list to the first boot server;
 - receiving at the client the boot server list; and
 - sending from the client a configuration information request for the client configuration information to each server in the boot server list until the client configuration information is found or a request has been sent to every server in the boot server list.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein at least one of the initial request, the list request, and the configuration information request is a trivial file transfer protocol request.
3. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - receiving, from the first boot server, an error message that indicates that the client information is not found on the first boot server.
4. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - receiving the client configuration information from an associated boot server in response to the client configuration information being found.
5. (Original) The method of claim 4, further comprising:
 - sending a boot file request for remaining boot files to the associated boot server based on the client configuration information.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
determining whether the entries in the boot server list were pre-ordered, in order to better support load balancing among boot servers, prior to transmission to the client;
and
if the list is found to be ordered, sending a configuration information request for the client configuration information to each server in the boot server list in the order given.
7. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
sending a configuration information request for the client configuration information to each server in the boot server list in order of increasing network distance, where distance is estimated from available network configuration information when there was no indication that the order of the original boot server list was optimized in order to better support load balancing.
8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the method is performed by a network bootstrap program.
9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the method is performed on a client computer.
10. (Currently amended) A method for providing client boot information in a network environment with multiple boot servers, comprising:
receiving at a boot server an initial request for client configuration information from a client;
if the client configuration information is not found, sending from the boot server an error message that indicates that the client information is not found;
receiving at the boot server a list request for a boot server list from the client; and
sending from the boot server the boot server list to the client.

11. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein at least one of the initial request and the list request is a trivial file transfer protocol request.

12. (Original) The method of claim 10, further comprising:
adding an indication to the boot server list to inform the client that the list is being provided in optimal order to support load balancing among boot servers.

13. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the method is performed on a boot server.

14. (Currently amended) An apparatus for retrieving client boot information in a network environment with multiple boot servers, comprising:

first sending means for sending from a client an initial request for client configuration information to a first boot server;

second sending means for sending from the client a list request for a boot server list to the first boot server if the client configuration information is not found on the first boot server;

receipt means for receiving at the client the boot server list; and

third sending means for sending from the client a configuration information request for the client configuration information to each server in the boot server list until the client configuration information is found or a request has been sent to every server in the boot server list.

15. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14, wherein at least one of the initial request, the list request, and the configuration information request is a trivial file transfer protocol request.

16. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14, further comprising:

means for receiving, from the first boot server, an error message that indicates that the client information is not found on the first boot server.

17. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14, further comprising:
means for receiving the client configuration information from an associated boot server in response to the client configuration information being found; and
means for sending a boot file request for remaining boot files to the associated boot server based on the client configuration information.
18. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14, further comprising:
means for determining whether the entries in the boot server list were pre-ordered, in order to better support load balancing among boot servers, prior to transmission to the client; and
if the list is found to be ordered, means for sending a configuration information request for the client configuration information to each server in the boot server list in the order given.
19. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14, further comprising:
means for sending a configuration information request for the client configuration information to each server in the boot server list in order of increasing network distance, where distance is estimated from available network configuration information when there was no indication that the order of the original boot server list was optimized in order to better support load balancing.
20. (Original) The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the apparatus is client computer running a network bootstrap program.
21. (Currently amended) An apparatus for providing client boot information in a network environment with multiple boot servers, comprising:
first receipt means for receiving at a boot server an initial request for client configuration information from a client;
first sending means for sending from the boot server an error message that indicates that the client information is not found if the client configuration information is not found;

second receipt means for receiving at the boot server a list request for a boot server list from the client; and

second sending means for sending from the boot server the boot server list to the client.

22. (Original) The apparatus of claim 21, wherein at least one of the initial request and the list request is a trivial file transfer protocol request.

23. (Original) The apparatus of claim 21, further comprising:

means for adding an indication to the boot server list to inform the client that the list is given in optimal order to support load balancing among boot servers.

24. (Original) The apparatus of claim 21, wherein the apparatus is a boot server.

25. (Currently amended) A computer program product, in a computer readable medium, for retrieving client boot information in a network environment with multiple boot servers, comprising:

instructions for sending from a client an initial request for client configuration information to a first boot server;

instructions for sending from the client a list request for a boot server list to the first boot server if the client configuration information is not found on the first boot server;

instructions for receiving at the client the boot server list; and

instructions for sending from the client a configuration information request for the client configuration information to each server in the boot server list until the client configuration information is found or a request has been sent to every server in the boot server list.

26. (Currently amended) A computer program product, in a computer readable medium, for providing client boot information in a network environment with multiple boot servers, comprising:

instructions for receiving at a boot server an initial request for client configuration information from a client;

instructions for sending from the boot server an error message that indicates that the client information is not found if the client configuration information is not found;

instructions for receiving at the boot server a list request for a boot server list from the client; and

instructions for sending from the boot server the boot server list to the client.